

The Builder.

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ARCHITECTURAL and artistic matters have occupied the attention of the legislature and the public, during the last few days, to a much greater extent than usual. A foreigner reading the parliamentary reports during this period might really be led to suppose, that the House of Commons did sometimes give a thought to the Beautiful, were slightly interested in the architectural appearance of the metropolis, and had at last attained a notion, that they had other things to do besides striving to keep one party in or drive another party out.

Is Buckingham Palace a worthy, or even endurable habitation for the Queen of England? Or can it be made so? Have we not power to prevent one or two well-meaning but mistaken individuals from injuring one monument at Hyde Park corner by the sacrifice of a second? Shall Westminster Bridge, a ruinous nuisance, once the world's wonder, be taken down and rebuilt? If so, how obtain designs in order to secure a perfect structure? and where should it be placed, to give the best effect to the new Parliament Houses? Can Mr. Barry and Dr. Reid be reconciled, and the aforesaid Parliament Houses be finished at last? Lastly, shall the British Museum, and other national collections of works of fine art, be opened to the public on Sundays, during such hours as the pot-houses are open? Our representatives don't assert now that knowledge is dangerous to all but the rich; that the contemplation of works of fine art has no good effect; that to talk of educating the public through the eye is nonsense, or if practical is unnecessary, not to say dangerous (though all this they asserted once, and were willing to burn for their opinions). But they still doubt as to smoothing the way for the acquisition of this knowledge, or giving opportunities for this contemplation; and so they think it better, at present at all events, not to afford the worker, on his weekly holiday, the choice between the healthful excitement of an instructive ramble with his family amongst the noble works of past times, and the destructive excitement of the pot-house, with its separating influences, and its other baneful, fearfully baneful, attendants.

These, however, are the questions which have been, and are still, before them,—all affording us matter for comment—indeed, calling for our attention now and again. Mr. Blomfield's report on the insufficiency of accommodation in Buckingham Palace, shewing the dreadful shifts to which our royal mistress is reduced to find room for her Majesty's family, guests, and servants, would be a most amusing document if it were not true. Noise, bad smells, confined and ill-ventilated apartments, kitchen a nuisance, no room for balls, and with imminent danger of fire, are set forth as some of the discomforts and risks amidst which the Queen has lived; and brought down, as might be expected, a nearly unanimous vote of 20,000*l.*, in part of the 150,000*l.* at which the whole cost of the alterations is estimated.

Now we do not find fault with this. If the Queen is not properly lodged, she should be. The London royal residences are a disgrace to the nation. But what we would urge is, that

no more public money should be spent, in addition to the large amount already wasted on this site, without the fullest assurance of a satisfactory result. The alterations proposed, include the building of a new east front to the palace; clearing out and re-arranging rooms in the south wing; new kitchens and other offices with hall-room over; decorations and painting; and taking down the marble arch: and we do hope that before these be attempted, some means will be taken to satisfy the public that they will not be called on twenty years hence, to pay for removing what they are now called on in the dark to pay for putting up.

The marble arch is a case in point. The erection of this tasteless and unsatisfactory structure, of a material quite unsuited for exposure to our atmosphere, cost an enormous sum of money, nearly as much, if we remember rightly, as was voted for the erection of the National Gallery, yet it is now to come down, and will not be grieved for by the judicious.

George IV. and Mr. Nash together, con-cocted to their own satisfaction the present palace,—a precious example of the would-be magnificent: without beauty, grace, or dignity. With such a warning before them, surely the public may fairly ask to be informed what the building will be like when the 120,000*l.* are spent, and be enabled themselves to judge whether or not it will then efficiently answer the purpose. A letter from a correspondent on this same subject will be found on another page.

In the matter of the "bronze horse," Lord Morpeth, let it be said with all respect, has disappointed us. The colossal figure of the Duke of Wellington is to be placed, by the force of Woolwich dock-yard, on the top of the archway for three weeks, and then if it be not approved of by the Government, it is to be taken down, and placed on the ground again. If this be not a mere blind, it is the most nonsensical arrangement we ever heard of; and, moreover, is not in accordance with the pledge made to the House when the works were stopped. The effect of the figure all can estimate but those who have raised an image in their own minds, which they mistake for the truth, and it needs no such costly experiment as is about to be tried, to prove that the result cannot be satisfactory. Once up, however, it is to be feared there will be little chance of relieving the arch of its incubus: to recel "all the Queen's horses and all the Queen's meo," to put bumpy-dumpy on the ground again, will be a task of no ordinary difficulty; and, like the old man of the mountain, in the Arabian tales, it will stick tight to its victim, and ride him to death. We bide the event.

The report of the committee appointed to consider the present state of Westminster-bridge, offers several points of interest, to which we must refer on another occasion. The only question in reality unsettled, appears to be the design for the new structure, and the best mode of obtaining it. The committee recognize these two principles, firstly, "That a suspension bridge is inexpedient, and (secondly) that irrespective of expense, a granite bridge is expedient." They took Professor Hosking's opinion as to a mode of securing the first talents in the production of the designs, and as this is a matter which immediately presses, we give the greater part of Mr. Hosking's statement in this respect.

"The essential matters should be defined by the proper authorities, in the first instance, and before attempts are made to obtain designs.

• Whether or not it will be resented cannot be said; it

A specification of what is required should then be made; and this should be more or less particular, as it may be determined either to fix a sum of money as the limit of expense, or, on the other hand, to receive designs with reference to the object, and without limiting the expense. Such a specification should be put into the hands of a reasonable number of competent practitioners, with a request that they would each make a design for the contemplated work in accordance with the stated conditions. All the designs so obtained may be examined and investigated with the advantage of the presence of their authors, to explain what they may have intended, and to correct what may be misunderstood. In this manner the best energies of competent men would be applied to the work, and it is probable that the best results would follow. . . . A general competition would end in general disappointment. . . . as none of the persons who would be recognized as most competent would send designs without being specially applied to for them. . . . At the time London-bridge was in contemplation, advertisements were issued for designs, with offers of some three or four premiums. Drawings were sent accordingly by seventy or eighty persons, and the premiums were awarded to the three or four which were said to be the best designs, but not one of them was used; they were immediately thrown away, and a design was taken up which had not been in the competition; but which, indeed, had been in the hands of the Bridge Committee beforehand, and the author of which was already dead. The late Mr. Rennie's design was executed. In order to avoid this apparent invidiousness and unfairness, and to secure the real benefits of a competition among competent men, the selection of the architects and engineers should be limited, and each should receive a certain remuneration for the work which he might send in. No man can afford to work for nothing. Every design asked for should be paid for; and no one ought to be asked, either directly or indirectly, to make a design unless it be intended to pay him for it. If this system were adopted, the property in the designs so sent in would be kept thereafter to the authority by the directions of which they had been sent in, so that the good parts of one design might be accommodated to the good parts of other designs, and the combined result of the whole would be something superior to that of any one individual design. This is one of the advantages from requiring designs from persons of known ability, and paying for them, so that all the designs obtained may be turned to account. It is the parties seeking designs, and who desire to derive advantage from the application of many minds to the same subject, that are to be benefited; and they who seek a benefit must be contented to pay for it. It can never happen but that in several designs for the same thing there will be some points or parts in some of the designs, other than that which may be generally the best, better than the same points in the best design. When all are paid for, all may be used; and the best design in a "concurrence" may be greatly improved by the incorporation of the excellencies of the others."

We select this one point the more particularly because we hear whispers that plans are already commissioned, and are most anxious that the design should be architecturally as well as constructively efficient; too little attention in this point of view having been heretofore paid to our bridges.

The sum named as the probable cost of the bridge is 300,000*l.*

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL.—It is with much pleasure we are able to state that the effigy and table tomb of Richard, Bishop of Chichester, who died 1252, which was in a sad state of mutilation, has, after some months of labour, been restored by Mr. E. Richardson, the sculptor, and replaced in its late position under the shrine, in the south transept of the cathedral; where, with much pomp and ceremony, Edward I. with Queen Eleanor and the court, witnessed the translation of the bishop's remains and the setting up of the present tomb, in the summer of 1270. A rose window has been placed in the east gable of the cathedral.